How to use your inhaler

If you are using a spacer with your inhaler, see the next page.

1. Shake the inhaler.

2. Remove the cap. If the canister is brand new or you have not used it for several days, spray it into the air 2 or 3 times to prime it.

3. Hold the inhaler upright with the mouthpiece facing you.

4. Tilt your chin up slightly and breathe out.

5. Open your mouth and hold the inhaler 1 to 2 inches from your mouth.

6. Begin breathing in slowly through your mouth while you push down on the canister. Breathe the medicine into your lungs slowly.

7. Hold your breath for 10 seconds to let the medicine get deep into your lungs.

8. Repeat if more than 1 puff is ordered. Wait at least 1 minute between puffs.

9. Place the cap over the mouthpiece.

10. If the medicine is a steroid, rinse your mouth with water and spit the water out.
How to use a spacer with your inhaler

A spacer is a hollow tube that attaches to your inhaler. The spacer holds the medicine from your inhaler until you are able to breathe it into your lungs. A spacer helps more of the medicine get into your lungs where it is needed. A spacer is also good for people who have trouble pressing the inhaler and taking a breath at the same time.

You will need a prescription from your doctor to get a spacer. Most pharmacies will have spacers or be able to get one for you. Check with your doctor or pharmacist if you have questions about using a spacer.

1. Shake your inhaler.
2. Remove the cap from your inhaler and the spacer.
3. Hold the inhaler up and place the mouthpiece into the large end of the spacer.
4. Breathe all the way out.
5. Put your lips around the mouthpiece of the spacer.
6. Press down on the canister of your inhaler one time and take in a slow, deep breath. **If you hear a whistling sound, you are breathing in too fast and need to slow down.**
7. Hold your breath for 10 seconds. Take the spacer out of your mouth.
8. Breathe out slowly.
9. Wait at least 1 minute and repeat if another puff is ordered.

How to care for your inhaler

You inhaler has many doses of medicine, so keep it in good working order. Use these tips to take care of your inhaler:

- Store it in a cool, dry place away from heat.
- Wipe off the mouthpiece with a dry tissue to keep it clean.
- Once a week, turn the inhaler upside down and tap, so the spray hole can be seen. Clean the hole with a dry cotton swab if it gets clogged.
How to clean the spacer

Medicine builds up inside the spacer. The spacer must be kept clean to work well.

**Clean the spacer when it is cloudy inside or at least one time each week.** If you use the spacer for more than one medicine, you may need to clean it every 2 to 3 days.

1. In a pan or bowl that is large enough to hold your spacer, place a few drops of antibacterial liquid dish washing soap and add warm water.
2. Place the spacer in the water to soak for 5 to 10 minutes.
3. Take the spacer apart and wash the pieces in the soapy water.
4. Rinse the parts well with clean water.
5. Shake to remove excess water and sit the spacer parts on a paper towel to air dry.
6. Make sure all parts are dry before putting it back together and using it.

When to replace a spacer

Ask your doctor for a new prescription to replace your spacer if:

- The spacer is cracked.
- Any rubber parts harden, curl or crack.
- Any part is broken or missing.
- The film inside the spacer will not come off with cleaning.

How long will the inhaler last?

Check the canister label to see how many puffs of medicine it contains.

Figure out how many puffs you will use each day. Divide the number of puffs in the canister by the number you will use each day. This is how many days the canister will last. For example, if your canister has 200 doses and you take 2 puffs 4 times each day, that is 8 puffs a day. Dividing 200 by 8 equals 25, so the canister will last 25 days.

Write the date on the canister when you start using it, so you can figure out when you will need to replace it.

**Throw the canister away after you have used the number of days or puffs in the canister even if it sounds like more medicine is left.** A chemical additive will be left in the canister after the medicine is gone.

Other tips

Keep track of how many doses are left by circling the start date on a calendar or writing down how many doses you use a month. **Call your pharmacist for a refill before your inhaler is empty.**

Bring your inhaler to your appointments so you can show your health care provider how you use the inhaler. Let them know if you are having trouble using the MDI. If you use more than one inhaled medicine, ask about the order in which to take these medicines.

Check the expiration date and do not use the medicine after it expires.